

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03029 251616Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----114794 251620Z /47

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8172

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 3029

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1-4
TAGS: PEPR, PINR, SY, LE, XF
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ASSAD REPORTEDLY DEPRESSED ABOUT LEBANON AND
MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

1. SYRIA'S UN PERMREP SHOUFFI TOLD CHARGE MAY 24 THAT IN HIS
FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT ASSAD MAY 20, HE HAD FOUND THE
PRESIDENT VERY TIRED AND DEPRESSED. ASSAD, HE SAID HAD
SPOKEN TO HIM AS A LONGTIME FRIEND AND BAATH PARTY COLLEAGUE.
ASSAD HAD CONFESSED HE NOW BELIEVED HIS DECISION TO INTERVENE
MILITARILY IN LEBANON HAD BEEN A MISTAKE BUT HE DID NOT
KNOW HOW TO UNDO IT. IF HE WITHDREW SYRIAN TROOPS NOW,
CIVIL STRIFE WOULD RETURN TO LEBANON AND COULD ALSO EASILY
SPREAD INTO SYRIA AS WELL.

2. SHOUFFI SAID ASSAD WAS EQUALLY DEPRESSED ABOUT THE CURRENT
COURSE OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS. ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT
ADMIT IT PUBLICLY, ASSAD HAD SAID, HE KNEW THAT 60 PERCENT
OF THE ARABS SUPPORTED SADAT'S INITIATIVE. HE HIMSELF
REMAINED CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE INITIATIVE WAS A MISTAKE
AND COULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO A COMPREHENSIVE MIDDLE EAST
SETTLEMENT.

3. SHOUFFI SAID ASSAD HAD GIVEN HIM NO INSTRUCTIONS REGARD-
ING THE CONDUCT OF HIS MISSION IN NEW YORK. THE SUBJECT

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HAD NOT EVEN COME UP. ASSAD HAD ONLY ADVISED HIM THAT IF
HE HAD ANY MESSAGE OF EXTREME IMPORTANCE TO TRANSMIT, HE
SHOULD USE A COURIER AND INSTRUCT HIM TO BRING THE
MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENCY. BOTH THE AMERICANS AND
THE RUSSIANS CAN READ OUR TELEGRAMS, ASSAD HAD SAID, AND NOT
EVERYONE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS RELIABLE.

4. COMMENT: SHOEFI WAS ELATED WITH THE MEETING WHICH HAD
EFFECTED A LONG-SOUGHT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN HIM AND PRES.
ASSAD. I BELIEVE HE WAS ACCURATELY REPORTING THE PRESIDENT'S
VIEWS ON THE OTHER POINTS DESCRIBED ABOVE.
PELLETREAU

SECRET

NNN

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